

Remarks

Claims 1-11 are presented for Examiner Reichle's consideration.

Pursuant to 37 CFR 1.111, reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

By way of the Office Action mailed April 2, 2003 Examiner Reichle indicated that the marked-up copy of claim 2 previously submitted did not comply with 37 C.F.R. 1.121, and that she has made the appropriate changes thereto in red ink to bring it into compliance. Applicants thank the Examiner for making this correction. It is assumed that the change alluded to dealt with an extra "the" in the claim.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that the proposed drawing correction submitted on January 21, 2003 has been approved and that corrected drawings would now be required in reply to the Office Action. However, the Examiner has also within the same Office Action objected to the approved drawings as not including some additional elements described in the specification and claims. As a result, the previously approved drawings have been further amended to include specific numerical reference to the locations of "Target Area", "Below the Target Area", and "Outside the Target Area", as requested by the Examiner. It is submitted that such numerical references do not add any new subject matter to the application and are fully supported by the language in the specification. Should the Examiner continue to have objections with the drawings in the application, Applicants would respectfully request a telephonic interview so that Applicants' representative can otherwise fully address any remaining drawing issues.

Also by way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has suggested that the previously amended Abstract would be in better form if it included different language as to the "the target area". Applicants have made the Examiner's suggested language change.

Also, by way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has objected to the disclosure as including inconsistent language/ illustrations as to the term "Target Area". As stated in the previous response, the specification defines "Target area" at page 7, lines 18-25. The "Target area" is the surface portion or position on a personal care product where an insult is normally delivered by the wearer. In this regard, a specific size of such an area is described for a variety of personal care products. The invention is designed to specifically delay the Z-directional transfer of fluid in the Target area and below (See page 4, lines 12-14). "Below the Target area", refers to layers below a bodyside layer (under the area of insult). See for instance, page 13, lines 19-22. Since such layers below the bodyside liner layer would delay transfer of fluid above them, such layers would affect the flow of fluid from the target area.

Such effects, may include slowing fluid entry into a location of the core under/below the target area, or alternatively, enhancing the flow of fluid to areas of the core not directly below the target area (areas not below the target area). See for instance page 15, lines 22-25, page 16, lines 1-5. As is particularly clear by the specification, areas of the core or other layers (below the target area) which may be treated or left untreated in some fashion, include areas which correspond to the target area above them in the Z-direction. Such corresponding areas are located in an area of layers below the liner layer, that would be created if lines could be drawn through the personal care product in the Z-direction from the target area. Such areas are identified by broken lines in the revised illustrations. Also, see for instance, page 16, lines 3-5. Given the description of the many embodiments for altering layers below the bodyside layer, Applicants assert that the invention is clearly described, and there is clear antecedent basis for the amended language in the claims and figures. By altering the fluid handling properties of layers below the target area of the bodyside liner layer, the fluid handling properties in and outside the target areas of personal care products are affected. Support for the language of the claims may be found at page 4, lines 23-25, page 14, lines 4-22, and page 15, lines 7-14. Further amendments have been made to the figures, claim language and the remaining specification in order to provide still additional clarification and bring more consistency to the application language. It is submitted that areas that are outside the target area, are areas within the personal care product that lie outside the enclosed areas identified by broken/phantom lines, and that also do not lie below the target area in the Z-direction. The areas outside the target area are identified by numbers 37 and 39 in the revised drawings. The broken lines have been added in the Z-direction to help illustrate the area of the product below the target area, and in particular, an area that is corresponding to the target area.

The Examiner has also objected to the specification as not providing proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. It is respectfully submitted that Applicants' amendments renders the Examiner's objection moot. Likewise, the Examiner has objected to the drawings as not showing every feature of the claimed invention. Applicants would respectfully submit that the drawing amendments also renders the Examiner's objection moot. The Examiner has also objected specifically to language in claims 2 and 11. Applicants thank the Examiner for her suggestion and have implemented her suggested language, rendering the objection moot.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-11 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. It is believed that the above amendments address all of the Examiner's concerns in this regard.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 4, 6, 9, and 10 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Steger et al. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims, for the following reasons. Steger teaches the use of

multiple superabsorbent materials, including encapsulated superabsorbent materials. In particular, the Steger reference teaches the use of encapsulated superabsorbent materials in the "wetting region" and non-encapsulated superabsorbent materials (conventional superabsorbent materials) in areas outside the wetting region. While the Steger reference teaches slow penetration of fluid into the encased material (as seen in the Examiner's citations), (it does not teach slower movement of fluid in the Z direction through the target area and below, compared to outside the target area.) Steger teaches "delayed storage capacity" through the mechanism of encapsulated superabsorbent materials. Essentially, the Steger reference doesn't delay fluid movement, but provides for freed up capacity at a later time, in order to accommodate numerous insults. Such material, according to Steger, will not prevent wicking of fluid, and is the "fluid wicking layer". (Further, Steger also teaches the use of an encapsulated superabsorbent material in a bottom layer. The reference specifically describes a two layer absorbent body including an upper fluid-acquisition layer and a lower fluid-storing and fluid wicking layer.) Such a layer arrangement is not indicative of slower fluid transfer in the Z-direction in the target area, as defined by the language of current claim 1, nor is it indicative of slower movement of one area compared to another. For the above reasons, Applicants most respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

The Examiner has cited the Dabroski '139 reference, but has not specified the reason for citing a specific section. In reviewing the section, it was determined that the Dabroski reference discloses a fluid repellant layer between two absorbent layers. However, the reference specifically describes the fluid repellant layer as a layer designed to protect product side failure, protect the wearer's undergarments and also provide resilient edges which aid in preventing chafing and irritation.

(Dabroski, col. 4, lines 7-15). Such material is conceived as being the entire width of the top absorbent layer or wider, a concept that differs markedly from the target area described in the current claims.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 6, and 8-10 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Raidel. PCT '546/US '714 This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims, for the following reasons. While the Raidel reference discloses the presence of numerous functional layers to direct drainage in a localized manner, it is not believed that such reference focuses on the distinct methodologies for directing such fluids utilizing a targeted area, and creating a structural arrangement using these methodologies to develop a contrast in performance between a focused target area and remaining areas.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2 and 11 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Hansen et al. '896. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims, for the following reasons.

The Examiner has asserted that the Hansen device teaches an absorbent core which has, or has more superabsorbent and a soluble binder in the area directly below the target region than in the area outside the area directly below the target region. It is not believed that the Hansen reference teaches the specific methodologies now claimed to create areas of contrasting functionality between a target and non-target area. Further, with respect to claim 7, it is believed that the layer 552 to which that Examiner refers is a "core" layer as opposed to a distribution layer, and therefore would not appropriately serve as a reference for the claim dealing with a separate distribution layer. Additionally, while the reference describes a "target zone" at col. 47, lines 27-40, it does not appear to contemplate a core with different compositions/structures (of the specific methodologies claimed) along its various length and width dimensions.

By way of the same Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2 and 11 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Weisman et al. This rejection is respectfully **traversed** to the extent that it may apply to the currently presented claims, for the following reasons.

The Examiner has asserted that the Weisman reference teaches an absorbent core which has a higher density in the area below the target area than in the area outside the area below the target region. It is respectfully submitted that the Weisman reference does describe a lower retention layer containing superabsorbent and an upper acquisition/distribution layer, but it does not describe a core layer with superabsorbent of a particular type in one area, and of a second type in surrounding areas. The reference specifically describes a two layer core including an upper fluid-acquisition layer and a lower fluid-storing layer. Such a layer arrangement is not indicative of slower fluid transfer in the Z-direction in the target area, as defined by the language of current claim 1, nor is it indicative of slower movement of one area compared to another.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicants therefore most respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn. Applicants therefore assert that the claims are in condition for allowance.

A Petition for a Two Month Extension of Time has been filed contemporaneously with this action, extending the time to respond to September 2, 2003.

Should the Examiner feel that issues remain unresolved, she is encouraged to call the undersigned at:(770)-587-8646.

Please charge any prosecutorial fees which are due to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. deposit account number 11-0875.

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Respectfully submitted,

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